



Press Release

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BlazeSports America Launches Unique Leadership Program for Youth with Physical Disability

ATLANTA, Ga. - Atlanta area youth with physical disabilities will develop leadership skills while building friendships with their peers when BlazeSports America launches its Trailblazers Youth Leadership Training March 28-29 at Kennesaw State University. The training will focus on developing leadership skills, self responsibility, healthy lifestyle behaviors and pre-vocational skills for young people with disability aged 13 and up.

A two-day retreat, including an orientation session at 4:00 pm on March 28 with parents or guardians, will launch the program followed by three interactive workshops held once per month. The Trailblazers program will culminate with a graduation ceremony June 14. Participating youth will receive a graduation certificate and also have many opportunities to apply their leadership skills during the program through real-life experiences.

Nancy Ward, M.Ed., an experienced educator and youth development expert, will facilitate the program along with support from BlazeSports staff. Guest speakers which include student leaders will also be featured. Curriculum topics include: communication skills, goal setting, conflict resolution, problem solving, self-awareness, self-advocacy, self-determination, pre-vocational skills, and developing healthy lifestyles.

“Young people who participate in leadership development are more likely to perform at higher levels in school, engage in their communities, and transition more effectively from adolescence into adulthood. However, youth with disabilities rarely have an opportunity to participate in leadership training experiences such as this,” said Ward. “This program will open the door to a learning experience these young people can carry with them for a lifetime.”

The Trailblazers Youth Leadership Training is funded by the General Unrestricted Fund of The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta and by a Quality of Life Grant from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. Additional funding partners for the program include Novartis Pharmaceuticals, Inc., the Georgia Department of Labor and Kennesaw State University.

Trailblazers is just one of the programs offered by BlazeSports America, the legacy organization of the 1996 Atlanta Summer Paralympic Games. BlazeSports provides sports training, competitions, summer camps, leadership training, and recreational opportunities for youth and adults who use wheelchairs, have a visual impairment, have an amputation, or who have a neurological disability such as cerebral palsy.

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